

Evolution of Digital Communication and how it shaped the world we know today

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<p>Digital communication has become the most commonly used form of communicating today. Through digitalisation our views, ways of understanding and interacting have changed. And today we are living in a world, where computers defy our everyday lives.</p> <p>The purpose of this thesis is to give a general understanding of digital communication and how it has evolved since the seventies until today. Before the digital era, the way people communicated differed significantly from the way we interact today. Through explaining how digital communication has evolved over the past 50 years, will give the readers a more clear understanding why digital communication has shaped each of us differently as independent digital users.</p> <p>The research was conducted as a qualitative research, based on the research made online and from personal experience in the modern digital world. The thesis is written in a literature-styled, as it has been found to be the most fit style to explain the evolution of digitalisation.</p> <p>The thesis includes basic information of digital communication and how ways of human communication have changed since 1970. The research shows how digitalisation has shaped not only the way the latest generation interacts but also affected other generations.</p>	
Key words Digital communication, social media, digital channels, role in today's society	

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1 Introduction

With this thesis, I would like to take a moment to appreciate and acknowledge the generation who grew up without any sort of digital devices, who put in hard work into searching for information and throughout their lives relied only on themselves to keep on track and take care of their matters of business.

The main topic of this thesis is to introduce and give the readers a general knowledge and understanding of digital communication. Digital communication will be viewed from different aspects, such as: digital citizenship, digital culture, digital and communication mediums.

Today people are very mobile, they check frequently on possible updates and notifications on their devices. Over the past 50 years the way how people used to spend their leisure time and communicate have changed drastically, digitalization has brought a lot changes into our lives. This research has been convicted based on how digital communication has shaped our everyday lives.

1.1 Background

I have chosen this topic for my thesis due to several reasons:

In the past year, I realised how much we take everything we have for granted, in how many ways we rely on our digital devices and how little we value what we truly have.

Digital communication is growing, with every day people become more dependent on staying connected, and new ways of being online keep being introduced more and more frequently.

Our ways to understand each other and see the world since digitalization have changed a lot, and from myself, I began to notice, that digital communication and being online, have changed the way I myself prioritize some matters or even evaluate their importance. Therefore, out of pure interest and curiosity, I decided to give into this research, to discover in more detail, how exactly digitalization has shaped the world we know today. Digital communication has become of high importance in our everyday lives, and it is affecting us in many ways.

1.2 Objectives and Limitations

The main objective and focus of this thesis is to show how much communication has changed since the seventies, and how much digitalization has changed our way to communicate and interact with each other. This thesis also examines and furthermore gives a better understanding of how digital communication has affected different age groups.

Before mobility, the views and interpretations of people were very much different from what they are today. Through understanding the roles of mediums and channels, we can learn to understand how different age groups communicate and see the world today.

1.3 Research methods and key resources

Because the thesis will have high focus on digital communication and the digital world, my resources will come naturally from the internet, as I have come to the conclusion of it being the most reasonable and accurate source of information.

In this thesis, I will be referencing not only the information gathered from my researches done online, but I will also share matters which my friends, relatives and I have faced as digital users.

1.4 Structure and Chapters

The thesis consists of five chapters. The introduction chapter provides background information and describes the objectives of the thesis. Chapter two gives the reader general introduction to digital communication, of its aspects: digital citizenship, communication mediums, digital culture and explains of what importance they are to digital users of different generation.

The third chapter focuses on how digital communication has evolved and what has become its role in today's society. The chapter is divided into three sections of different time periods. In each time period, important mediums and channels are introduced according to their time of appearances. I begin the discussion of digital channels and mediums from the day they became available to people, and end with what their role has become in the modern world.

In the fourth chapter of the thesis, I examine advantages and disadvantages of digital communication as a one whole concept. I will conclude the thesis in the fifth chapter, with a conclusion of to what changes digitalisation has brought us to.

2 Digital Communication

"Only through communication can human life hold meaning" – Paolo Freire (Freire, 1993).

Communication is the core to our societies, it plays a vital role in human life. Through communication we deliver our opinions, thoughts, ideas, knowledge; we listen, understand and respond to others, and establish relationships.

The forms of communication have been changing for as long as human kind has existed, from cave drawings to today's most commonly used communication form – digital communication.

Digital communication, as defined is a mode of communication where the information or thought is encoded digitally as discreet signals and electronically transferred to the recipients.

Today mostly everything is digitized, encrypted into binary codes and people themselves are becoming more and more mobile. Through such technological development, a new society has been created, a digital society, with digital citizens, with digital culture. (MSG Experts.)

2.1 Communication Media

Today, many forms of communication media are known to mankind. When we talk about communication media, we are referring to the many ways of how any sort of content, can be delivered or received (Techopedia, 2017).

There are two categories of communication mediums:

1. Physical media

Channels of physical media aim is to make the speaker(s), their body language, and the milieu visible to the audience. Physical media communication can be divided into few types:

- Verbal and non-verbal face-to-face communication, where you and the receiver are in the same physical location, f.ex job interview, meetings and conferences etc.

- Two-way remote communication, where you and the receiver are in different physical location, but are able to exchange feedback, information and forth from each other, f.ex teleconferencing, video calls, texts etc.

2. Mechanical media

Channels of mechanical media are either written or electronic:

- Written communication is any sort of communication, which involves text. The content of the text can be either formal or informal, depending on the receiver. Examples of written communication are: emails, letters, texts, contracts etc.
- Electronic communication, otherwise known as social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and so forth. Other types of electronic communication are different web-based management tools, one-way audio and video communication, f.ex YouTube, podcasts, voice mailing and so forth. (Communication Toolbox 2017.)

2.2 Digital culture

Writer Clayton D'Arnault, describes digital culture as an idea that technology and internet shape the way we interact, behave, think and communicate in societal settings. It is a lifestyle, of which we are a part of (D'Aurnault, 2015).

In my perspective, it is the everyday routine for mostly everyone today, including myself, to wake up to the ring of the alarm clock (on the phone) and throughout the entire day follow messages, email, Instagram and Facebook updates and so on, all day long until the night, until it is time to go to bed again.

Digital culture is mostly our usage of social media as our main mode to interact with others, to share moments of our lives online, to live-stream, not to mention the ongoing selfie hype these days. The culture is more than just keeping track of what is going on in the digital society. As any another society, the digitized world has its own rules and standards, which must be followed as any other. And as all the other societies, the digital culture runs by digital citizens.

2.3 Digital citizenship

People are characterized as digital citizens when they use IT frequently, they are either involved in e-commerce, they create blogs or other online content, use social networks or participate in online journalism. Today most often digital citizenship begins once a person uploads for their very first time any sort of contents online, whether it is a picture, video, advert, anything. (Ribbel, 2017.)

2.3.1 Nine elements of Digital Citizenship

According to digitalcitizenship.net, digital citizenship is not only a teaching tool. It aims to prepare and educate digital users of appropriate digital communication behaviour.

The elements of Digital Citizenship are:

1. Digital access:

One of the main fundamentals for digital citizenship. In practice defines the many different forms and ways of obtaining access to internet f.ex. through schools, community centres, internet cafés and forth.

2. Digital commerce:

The ability for users to recognize that mostly the economy is regulated online. Digital commerce deals with understanding making purchases online, education on credit card usage and raising awareness among digital users concerning illegal downloads, plagiarism etc.

3. Digital communication:

Educates digital citizens to understand the varieties of online communication and that for every medium, there is a standard of etiquette f.ex emailing, texting, WhatsApp, Facebook etc.

4. Digital literacy:

Educates digital citizens how to properly search for something using different search engines and online logs, and how it differentiates from using databases.

5. Digital etiquette:

A sub-element of digital communication, which educates digital citizens of appropriate behaviour and language usage on certain mediums.

6. Digital law:

Educates digital citizens of the consequences of hacking, creating viruses, spams, identity theft etc.

7. Digital rights and responsibilities:

Set of rights of digital citizens, such as privacy and speech

8. Digital health:

Raises awareness of digital citizens to not become dependent of the internet, and educates of possible health issues, such as headaches, stress problems and so forth

9. Digital security:

Educates digital citizens of the dangers online and guides them to taking precautions when surfing the web in form of applying f.ex virus protection, using difficult passwords, backing up data and so on.

(Ribbel, 2017.)

2.3.2 Why Digital Citizenship is important

A coordinator for educational Tech of Santa Clara Unified School District, Kathie Kanavel, said:

” Digital citizenship is really important for 21st century skills, because being a 21st century citizen means that you can collaborate and communicate, and you need to do that not only the people you face with but also those that you encounter in digital world”.

The world is becoming more and more digital. Schools worldwide begin to integrate technology in classrooms. The kids today are introduced at such an early stage of their life to technology that they are at risk of being violated online or cyber-bullied, why therefore, it is crucial they are educated in good time of the nine elements of digital citizenship. Thus, it can be assured that the children will grow up to be aware and responsible digital users. (Bharti, 2014.)

2.3.3 Digital Generations

In this chapter, I would like to elaborate on the different digital generations and the ways of their communication:

The eldest generation, maturists, those who were born prior to 1945, the generation to which we are beginning to say good-bye to. Those who went through the war times and to so to say, have seen life in action. Among us all, they remain the only citizens who prefer to interact with others face-to-face and communicate via formal letters.

Baby-boomers, offspring of the years 1945 – 1960. The early adapters on information technology, those who grew up communicating via rotary dial telephones and had no other else communication media in addition than a square-boxed television.

Generation X, born between the years 1961 – 1980. Generation of “digital immigrants” that adapted the use of personal computers and began to communicate via email and texting.

Generation Y 1981 – 1995, my generation. The generation that saw the beginning of the social media, reality television, PlayStations, the one that watched technology expand and develop to where it is today.

And last, but not least, the latest generation, generation Z, those who were born after 1995. The generation to which it is obvious and essential to communicate via a hand-held device. (Lacasta, 2015.)

As I see the division of the generations in the world we live in today, are parents and grandparents trying to pull their kids off their digital devices. I asked my mom and grandparents what they did in their spare time, and their answers were that they used to spend it out with their friends, invent or create new ideas and things to do. They read books, educated themselves by doing and discovering things on their own.

When the boom of technology happened so fast that the elder generation barely had the chance to adapt to the devices, and many baby-boomers and maturists were stuck wondering of why should they replace the things they do by themselves with the help of robotics and computers.

Thinking back on my childhood, the dependence on television was already beginning in my generation. And ever since, the young, kept adapting new communication mediums. Perhaps the reason why we (generation Y and generation Z) adapted so fast is because we never tried to understand the purpose to why we need the devices. We just accepted it as self-evident.

3 Evolution of Digital Communication

Not many kids today would be able to understand how a rotary dial telephone works, or imagine that once there was a day, when computers were a size of bookshelves, that in order to connect to internet you had to call the server for hours, how about imagining that the first mobile phone weighed around 2 kg and had to be charged 10 hours for full battery, what gave a user just 30 minutes to talk to someone, until the phone would be dead again?

The role of digital channels has grown significantly since the release of the first cellular devices. With everyday more and more people become more dependent on their smartphones, tablets and laptops. Few people today can imagine or even survive a day without using a smart device. There have been many jokes online that the apocalypse will come, when someone will turn off the internet.

This part of the thesis introduces how communication and its role have evolved over the past 50 years. The communication mediums will be discussed in chronological order, sorted and analyzed from the years they became available to consumers and households until the present time.

3.1 1970 – 2000

Our parents and grandparents didn't have as much luxury when they were growing up as we do today. They relied on the information they received from books, encyclopaedias and news they read from daily newspapers or heard from the radio.

Most might remember their elderlies telling stories of how they used to hang out in cafés, go to parks, camping or be involved in other activities with their classmates and friends when they were young.

In those days to stay in touch people approached each other and asked face-to-face whether, or not the other would be interested in doing something. To ask a friend out, you would walk to their door, knock, and ask their parents if Simon can come out and play. And imagine asking someone on a date in those times, the amount of fear to confront the other in such situation. Many can agree, the panic we would all be in, if we would have to communicate in the same way as people did back in those times.

It wasn't until the nineties when little by little the world started to become digital and form the societies we know today.

3.1.1 Radio

Believe it or not, radio wasn't always an available feature on your phones and it wasn't pre-installed in vehicles. Before television and computers became part of our household equipment, radio was their substitute. It was a communication medium through which people received their daily news, kept on track of different events and happenings. Radio was even used to advertise and sell products, the same way as television advertisements today.

In many countries radio has served also as a war communication medium through the wars of the 20th century, notifying households of fallen troops, warning of approaching forces. Radio was also the quickest and fastest media to notify of upcoming crisis, such as heavy storms and hurricanes.

Today radio is most commonly used to listen to music broadcasts either when you're driving somewhere or simply want to listen to the radio from your phone. After so many years it remains a popular media channel, and in addition to being a broadcaster of music and information, radio communication provided for us two-way communications, cell phone communication. (Techwalla 2017.)

3.1.2 Television

When speaking today about television, people firstly think of a flat LCD screen, they imagine different features of the television, such as: dimensions, colour, sound, sharpness etc. In the 70s however, there wasn't as rich variety of televisions compared to today's market. For one, televisions were box-shaped. Second, it wasn't until the 80s they were colourful. By colourful, meaning the picture, not the colour of the box. Yes, our grandparents and our parents indeed, have been watching black-and-white television the whole time.

When our folks were growing up, they spend their youth playing outdoors, they had more time to be creative and use their imagination. They figured out ways how to entertain themselves, coming up with new ideas of what they can do. Many today can agree that television has become a "brain rotter" when misused, and some studies have even shown that too much television decreases communication skills and even the level of intelligence.

As a communication medium, television has always had a high influence on our lives. Television engages us in many ways and several studies have found that television changes the way we spend our leisure time and changes our views on different matters. By making us feel as though as we are directly experiencing events, television has

changed the way we receive information and understand the world. There have been several research studies, which showed that messages, images and other sort of content received from the television, actually shape our whole social system.

Television has changed a lot during the past 50 years. At first there were mostly news, romantic movies or movies about the war. Through time, the shows started to change, new genres appeared, such as drama, action, science-fiction, you name it. People wanted something what they could fantasize about. (Olson 2016.)

Lately, based on the content many see today on television, I could say the audience has shown a high demand in reality-shows. Most of them involve relationships such as First Date at the Altar (Ensitreffit Alttarilla), Ex on the Beach, not to mention the many versions of the “Shore” programs (Jersie Shore, Geordie Shore etc.) There have also been shows about teen moms, catfishing and other fraud related shows, weight loss shows, shows where people are suffering from different syndromes or getting hurt on purpose in means of entertainment, and so on.

Last year, I happened to watch Tomorrowland, starring George Clooney, where one of the main characters Casey (Britt Robertson), was referring to a tale of two wolves, which is originated from a Cherokee legend (Native American):

“It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. Which wolf will win?” – “The one you feed” (Virtuesforlife, 2017).

For those who haven’t seen the film, tiny spoiler alert... In the film, a machine via television and other devices was feeding people the idea of the world coming to an end. By continuously being fed such information, people accepted their fate, making the prophecy even more true. Casey realized that the wrong wolf is being fed, that the idea of people consuming such images, the result is inevitable.

After watching Tomorrowland, it made me ponder, of how much “feeding the wrong wolf”-theory can be true in our today’s society. Is there actually a chance that we are being fed such shows, ideas perhaps, for a reason?

Were you aware that the brain is more open to suggestion when you are watching television, because when you are watching television, you are not really thinking?



Picture 1: A human's brain is more open to suggestion when watching television (Julie, 2011)

Discussion on the many possibilities of how television influences our lives can be infinite. Several reasons, which studies have showed why we watch and perhaps even should continue watching television are:

Television educates us in many ways. From toddler shows of ABC's and such to DIY-programs (Do It Yourself), psychological or other educational shows f.ex National Geographic. Many find the educational programs more interesting and fun to watch compared to learning the same things for example in classes

It entertains us with movies of genres to our likings, stand-up comedy and so forth. Not to mention the various providers of online video services, such as Netflix and Viaplay.

But despite all the joy and pleasure we receive from watching television, the medium affects our daily lives in many ways. It causes distraction; when we are watching television, we are so focused on what is being transmitted that we can miss what someone is saying to us. Maybe, the reason to why kids today don't do their chores, is because they are told to do so when they are staring into the screens.

Some doctoral studies have even shown that television decreases imaginary skills. With television, people and kids today in particular are so used of being entertained by television that without it, they cannot entertain themselves or think of what they could do. (Erupting Mind 2017.)

3.1.3 Computers

When I was beginning to write my thesis, I asked my mother how she had written hers back in her school days, in the eighties. The answer was: "Well, we sure didn't have Google and we didn't have CTRL + F shortcuts. We had libraries and archives and two ways to write the thesis: by hand or a typing machine."

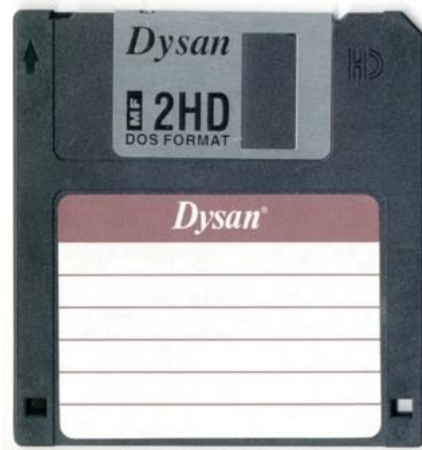
"Well, wasn't a typing machine a better option than writing by hand?", I asked, "If it only were that easy," she replied, "Not everyone owned typing machines, you weren't able to bring one in a library (because of the noise and the weight). The alternatives were to either rent one or to take the handwritten material to a typist if you couldn't type it yourself."

I struggled with the idea of why on earth it would be hard for someone to type on a typing machine, since it is almost the same as writing, press letter by letter and that's it. Well, it appears that in the late eighties the only people who were taught to use a typing machine were secretaries.

The only computers available, were installed in corporations. Not only because of their high price at the time, but also due to their huge size. They were a size of book shelves, taking most of the office place. Household computers came later in the nineties, but even their usage wasn't as simple as it is today.

When Internet had just come out, a user wasn't able to open the browser with a mere click of a button, it required a dial-up connection, meaning you had to have a telephone network and be very patient. In those days connecting to the world web took a lot of time, not to mention "ages" it took for some content to be opened, downloaded or saved.

Speaking about saving contents, instead of USB-sticks, back in the days, we used to save our contents on floppy disks. They usually had about 1,44 MB memory, which today wouldn't allow you to download barely anything.



Picture 2: Floppy Disk used for memory storage (Wikipedia, 2017)

The role for which computers have been created, is to be an electronic brain which people can rely on. In the beginning, their main task was to help businesses with calculations, archiving data and with processing any other sort of information, which was found difficult for the human brain.

I think that all can agree, that in the modern society the role of computers has extended. Computers have become one of the fastest providers of information, nowadays you can find everything about anything or even anyone online. (UKEssays 2015.)

Computers share with Television many similar advantages and disadvantages. But there are other benefits, which computers provide unlike television. For once, the users have freedom of choice, we can always decide what we are searching for and what search engines we are using.

Unlike purchasing through television adverts, when we shop online, we not only can choose the stores and what we are purchasing, but we can get more thoroughly acquainted with the terms and delivery of our purchase. Many online stores and other web pages these days provide customers with an online customer service chat, where an employee advises customers and helps with resolving issues. Customers don't have to wait no more in lines to handle their agenda, many matters today can be resolved by simply chatting from your home couch.

Computers have made it easier for us in so many ways to perform different tasks faster and with less effort. Today all you need is to Google what you want to find out. The world has applied computers into every field of business and every household has at least on computer today.

Despite, the convenience we have today and the easy accessibility to any information whenever and wherever we are, computers have had a negative influence on societies as well. The young generation has become consumed by spending their time either gaming or being digitally-socially active. Computers have created a so to say waste of energy, meaning the user is spending a lot of time at the computer screen without really achieving anything. (Khan 2013.)

3.1.4 Mobile phones

Not many kids today would believe that one day, the item below (Pic. 3), was once a telephone. A rotary dial phone, where, in order to select a number, the caller had to put his or her finger in the corresponding finger hole, rotate the dial clock wise until full stop. Once this was done, the caller would remove his or her finger from the hole, let the dial go all the way back and would do the same thing all over again until he or she had dialled the whole number.



Picture 3: Rotary Dial Phone (Wikipedia,2017)

If a person would have misdialled, there were no correction buttons to replace the false digit. The person would have had to clear the dial and start all over, which might be one of the reasons why our grandparents and parents never forgot phone numbers of their friends and relatives.

With time, rotary-dial phones, started to get upgraded, the rotary-dial changed to buttons, the wires changes to batteries and chargers. In 1973, the very first handheld mobile cell phone was demonstrated by Motorola, which weighed 2 kg, charged for 10 hours and offered only 30 minutes of usage, which at that time was only to call somebody.

Few decades later, Motorola was overtaken by NOKIA, who became the world's best-selling mobile brand. Since the new millennium, NOKIA was conquering the market with its cellular devices, most popular one, which many might still remember was the "indestructible" NOKIA 3310. It wasn't until 2007, when Apple introduced its first iPhones, the 1st generation, with multi-touch sensors.

Since then the race began, companies started launching cell phones one after another, trying to outdo the previous models, making them slimmer and better.

Today mobile phones are a vital accessory to people, to my mind, for many it is an obsession. In the modern society, in a way, the person's whole life is in his smartphone. Once you think about it, the first thing you do in the morning is turn off the alarm on your smartphone. During breakfast or on the way, you already check up on any possible updates, which have happened overnight.

When you come to think about it what are the other things you have on your smartphone, the apps can be limitless, lets list some, shall we: blogs, news, entertainment, health, food, maps, photos, calendars, shopping lists, reminders, appointments, work shifts and meetings, bank, other accounts, the list can go on and on. One could even say that smartphones, in today's society are a digital version of their owners. Maybe there is a reason to why Steve Jobbs named the iPhone an "I-PHONE".

The greatest advantage of having phones today is the instant accessibility. You can contact anyone at any time, and in the same way anyone can reach you. No more lining up for the payphones or waiting ages for a response. There are also limitless features what can be accessed via phones, and their amount is increasing.

Even though we have everything with only a mere tap away, the easy accessibility has done its job. I believe many of us today have been in a situation, when you are on your way to work school anywhere, everyone around you are also in a hurry to get to where

they need to be, out of all effort you try to get through and then, all of a sudden, that beautiful person gets in your way, stuck in their phones who doesn't seem to be getting anywhere, at least any time soon. (Tomasovic 2014.)

3.2 2000 – 2012

The generation, which I think has experienced the most out of this era, are the eighties and nineties kids. They got the hang of the new devices by simply testing which buttons do what, their parents however and their grandparents as well were left to figure it out the hard way.

People recovered from the millennium's "world is going to end" predictions and the world realized, that stepping foot into a new century, everything didn't turn with a snap of a finger into a science-fiction fairy-tale as some have thought it would.

Life went on, and with it technology continued its growth. Industries became more innovative, providing consumers with product which reached higher standards and demands.

In this chapter I will discuss communication channels of the new millennium and the beginning of today's most known sensations: blogging and vlogging.

3.2.1 Email

Email was one of the first main digital communication channels. Throughout the years its use and purpose have varied. Electronic email primarily was designed for business correspondence.

In the beginning of the millennium, we didn't have right away instant messaging or other social media sites, so once everyone had their own email accounts, people began sending each other letters, cards, pictures etc. via email. It was fast, free, and reliable.

Once social media sites started coming out, and people realized that there are better and more efficient ways to stay in touch with their friends and relative, the email's purpose changed back to being mostly a medium for business communication. Other matters, which many people prefer to handle more via email are for example: newsletters, e-invoices, notifications and other formalities.

In addition to being one of the most efficient and reliable communication channels, email has many other features. Users can connect accounts, an ideal example is guiding your work email to your regular account, which keeps you on track of any possible updates.

Also, when sending out emails, the sender can add as many recipients to the message as they can, not to forget the BCC and CC options. (Federici 2017.)

There is a lot of practicality to emailing, however email accounts require a lot of maintenance. I personally mostly dislike the fact that all messages are in one whole pile, unless categorized, finding the email you need after a while is almost impossible. Even if the user chooses to have several folders for his or her emails, the user will have to move the email to that folder every time a new email arrives. Another unfortunate feature of emails is that unless the email is deleted, it will remain in the inbox as long, as the account is valid. Last year I was stuck in a situation, when my iCloud began complaining that my memory is running out, it appeared I had emails since 2013...

3.2.2 Texting

Once the mobile phones started spreading out around households, people started texting each other. People were able to inform others of what they were doing and where they were, with a simple press of a button, today it is done just by tapping their screens.

When we still had button mobiles, the letters were organized 3 letters per button, and to type a message, the sender had to press the button until the needed letter was selected. Correct, the predictive input feature wasn't always available on our phones. I remember, there was a day, when we even used to compete against each other on who had the fastest texting fingers.

It has all become easier today. Not only do you have an accurate keyboard on your screen, but different features of predictive input, dictation and possibilities to send a record of what you want to say as a text if you don't feel like tapping in the message yourself.

One of the biggest minuses of texting to my mind, is the fact that people have begun to avoid real life confrontation. With texting or instant messaging, people feel free to send whatever they wish with few regards on the receiver. Many can agree, that quite often these days you see people quitting their jobs or breaking up with someone over a text.

Texting has become a way of communication, which must be quick, immediate. Not to speak of the many different apps available today for just that purpose: WhatsApp, Viber, Hangouts, we use messenger apps of other programs and so on.

The way we send text messages have changed, with autocorrect and dictation features, people rarely bother to spell check their messages anymore, as the result, we see people bursting out on social media about how autocorrect is ruining their lives. (Erickson, 2012.)

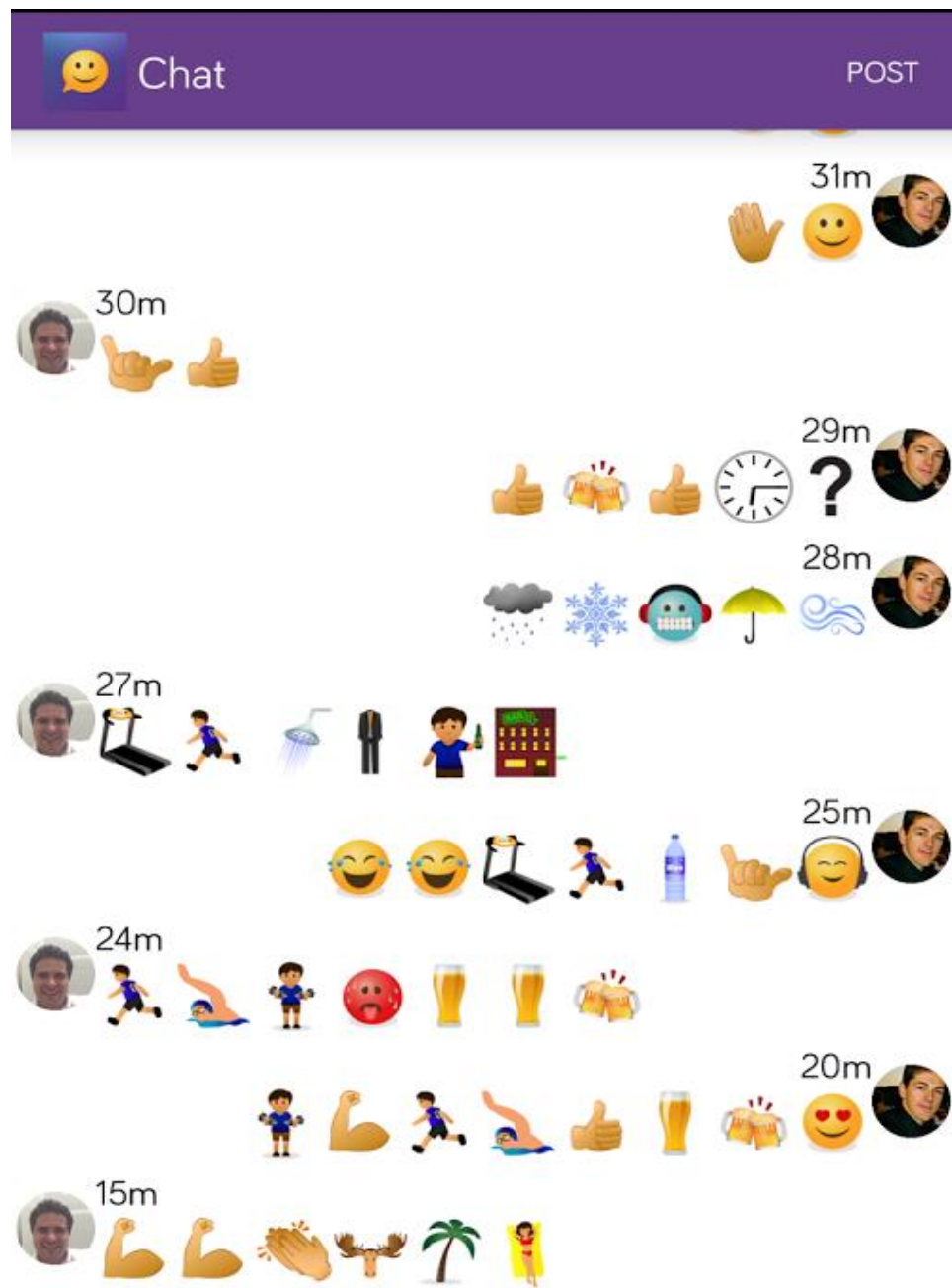
Though texting started off in text format, through evolution of digitalism, communication via texts obtained a new form, a symbolic form. From sending each other text messages, we began to send MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service) today a new way to communicate - through emojis, what are emojis? Before, they were known just as smileys and other ideograms in electronic messaging.

Many teens today replace many of the words with emojis. As an example of such phenomena, In the image (Pic. 4), I demonstrate few examples of phrases and



Picture 4: Examples of phrases in emoji-language expressions I have seen in modern texting.

Think you've got it? Want to try making out the conversation below?



Picture 5: An example of an emoji-conversation in the modern world (Emojicate, 2017)

3.2.3 Facebook

The story of how Mark Zuckerberg has founded Facebook is known to every digital citizen globe wide. Facebook since its beginning has served not only as a social media site to stay in touch with friends and relatives, but also, as we have noticed, it has been an amazing tool for event planning, advertising, marketing and so forth.

In the today's society, any sort of information can be shared on Facebook. All students who are reading this thesis can relate to how convenient Facebook has been throughout the studies. Not only do we have a community where we keep each other on track of important projects and events, but also remind each other of important due dates and upcoming exams, which let's face the truth, few usually find out about at the last minute. But not only Facebook groups are good for students, it provides companies with the similar benefits.

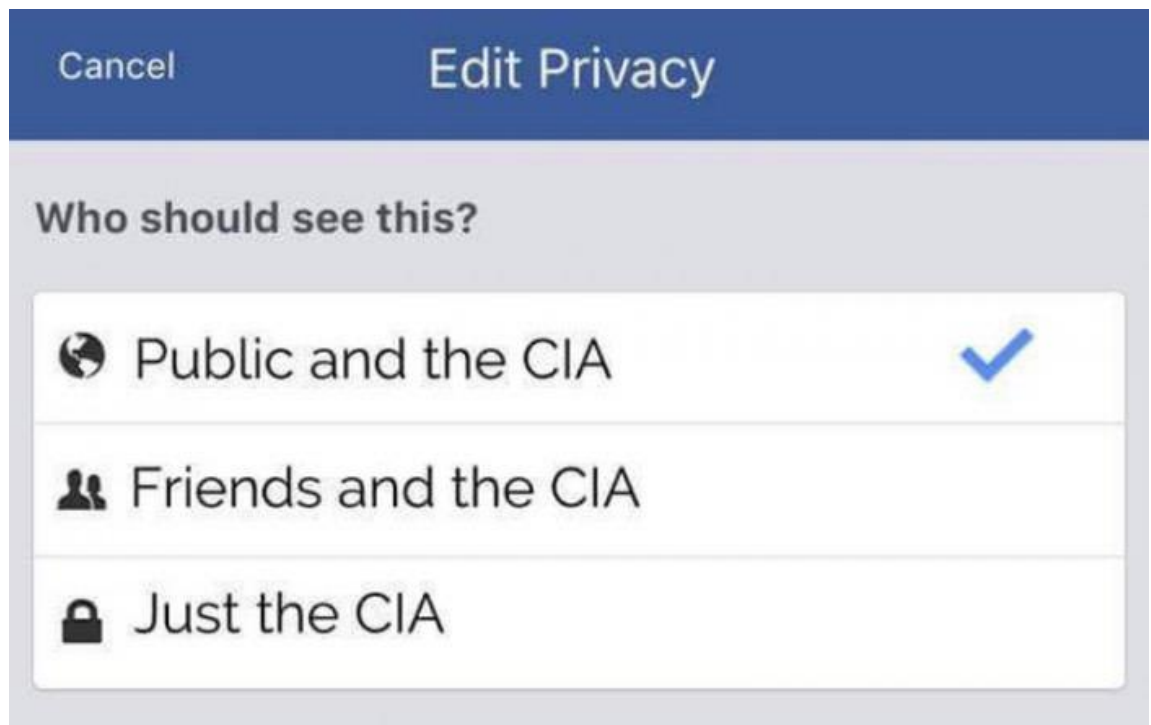
The user can edit his or her Facebook page to their own liking. On Facebook, as we all know, we can display our birthdays, interests, work placements, relationship status, anything we would want others to see. We have made Facebook our personal online page, which anyone can access.

Jessica Elgot, defines in her article, in *The Guardian*, how Facebook changed our understanding of terms, such as: friend, like and share. Today people can have many connections, but what you see most commonly on Facebook is that users add people as their friends whom they knew for a brief time long ago, or whom they met only a few times. Nowadays any acquaintance can be friended or de-friended with a simple click (Elgot 2015).

People value their privacy, but what few realise is that the more you have about yourself on social media, the less privacy you actually have when users become more exposed to risks of being violated online, or even having their identities stolen.

A blogger, Johanna Mary C. Valdez wrote in one of her blogs: as a frequent Facebook user, it is important to know your own priorities and to have the ability of self-control. Users should know their responsibilities and be aware of the risks, which they are put at, the moment they share more about themselves on the world web. (Valdez 2017.)

What to my mind, Facebook has ruined, is getting to know a person through socializing. In the “stone age”, by which I mean the 1970 – 2000, when people were going on their meeting with someone, they had no idea of how they looked or had any knowledge of their background. Today before you meet someone, what is the first thing you do? Exactly! You Facebook them! You go through the person’s whole page to see where they have been, with who they have been, where have they worked, you look through their photos, do you have mutual friends and all sorts of other craziness.



Picture 6: How secure are users despite the privacy settings? (9gag, 2017)

3.2.4 YouTube

It is already over a decade that YouTube has been our source to music clips, movie trailers, and all other video contents we could ever think of. But not only does the channel serve for entertainment purposes, in the present day, it is a reliable and clear source to many learning materials and much more.

YouTube creates possibilities and opportunities. Many people have been found and have obtained successful careers thanks to the channel. When users access YouTube they don't have to worry about any subscriptions, it is enough for them to sign up and just start doing whatever they have set their minds on. (Soffar 2015.)

At this moment, according to YouTube's statistics, people who are the most followed on the channel are gamers. YouTube has helped to build a better virtual community for gamers and helped them to come a bit out of their shells (Diu & Ritchie 2015).

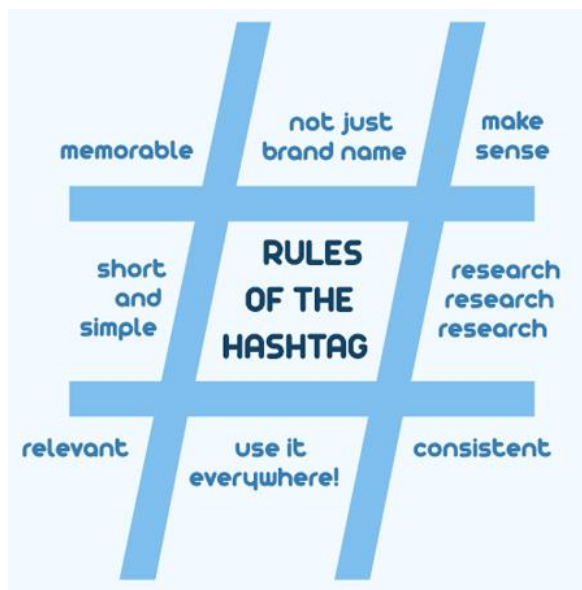
YouTube doesn't really have any parental locks or any security policies to protect the young or anyone else in that matter from damaging contents. Some videos on YouTube don't include any sorts of warning or notifications of their violent contents, to which anyone can become exposed to. Anyone can access almost any video or other sort of contents available on YouTube, which limits at the end of the day the publisher's privacy and causes issues of copyright infringements. (Feldman 2007.)

In the digital world, everything is linked together. Once a content is uploaded on YouTube, it can be shared through any other digital channels as well, such as Facebook, Twitter, email and so forth. What I have noticed many YouTubers do as well, is have a website linked to their YouTube channel, which enhances the possibilities of them being discovered. (Pappas 2015.)

3.2.5 Twitter

Twitter – the birthplace of hashtags. By placing a hashtag in front of a word, the word is changed into a searchable link, examples of hashtags can be anything, f.ex: #haaga-helia, #thesis, #coffee, #studies and so on. When a hashtag is used, it means that the person who made the post wanted to create a link between his or her post and the hashtag itself. Not only can hashtags refer to subjects and materials, but you can mark also people (Hiscott, 2013).

To clarify the best way how to use hashtags, explains the image below (Pic. 7):



Picture 7: Guidelines to how to use hashtags correctly (Dane, 2016)

In my observation, what many (mostly elder generation) have confused with hashtags is the @ - symbol, which is meant for a completely different matter than hashtags. The @ - symbol is used when you want to send someone a tweet via the @Connect tab. In such cases, the user would tap in his or her tweet, and mark the person to whom they want to send the tweet in the format: @JohnDoe.

To this day, the main strength of Twitter has been real-time, what no other digital channel has come close to so far. The digital channel remains until today the best indicator of what is happening in the world (Hutchinson 2016).

Twitter compared to most other digital communication channels is much more simple to use. To sign up for an account it takes just a few seconds, after what the tweeter can start following anyone worldwide and anyone from anywhere can follow the tweeter. Tweet options today are also possible not only on Twitter itself, but on other websites and social media pages.

Unlike other social media channels today, Twitter is more about text and content than visuals. It focuses more on the links, the hashtags than sharing some picture or video. The lack of the software is its tweet limitations, users cannot tweet tweets exceeding more than 140 characters, for that, the tweeters need to have third party applications. It has also been noticed that there is a lot of spam on Tweeter. From my personal experience the spam is not only from different advertisers and merchants, but the software gets hacked quite regularly and there are many fake accounts created to deceive Twitter users, as to pretty much on any other social media channels these days. (MuchTech 2017.)

3.2.6 Blogging and Vlogging

Since the moment, there has become a possibility to share contents online, people figured out a new way to share their stories and anything else they like with the rest of the world. Those ways have become blogging and vlogging. What is the difference between the two?

The term “blog” is originated from “web log”, where the blogger writes a journal of anything they like. In today’s digital world, digital users can find blogs about: fashion, health, culinary, DIY (Do It Yourself), design and so on (Saddington 2010).

Vlogging, on the other hand is a video blog. Instead of sharing a post or writing out their emotions, users can post a video journal of whatever they wish. Before the mostly preferred word for vlog were podcasts, but in the today’s word, podcasts mean a completely different thing (Gunelius, 2016).

Many people today are taking blogging and vlogging as their full-time jobs. Why? Because more and more people want to be their own boss, do what they love and prove their creativeness, to leave their own mark in the world.

Though the starting process of becoming a blogger or a vlogger takes a lot of time and requires commitment, patience and plenty of motivation, once you have hit the high charts, the result is worth the effort. Both, of the modes have their own advantages and disadvantages and are capable of providing a blogger or vlogger with different outcomes. (Davis, 2014.)

3.3 2012 – Today

Today when kids get from school, most of their parents see them either stuck in a game at their computers or busy texting their BFFs, tapping their mobile screens. Also, you quite often see toddlers in their trollies or shopping carts watching cartoons on a smartphone or a tablet, not to mention that many toddlers these days are capable of opening cartoons on the devices on their own.

When I was discussing the mobility of kids these days with one of my fellow colleagues, who worked as an elementary substitute teacher, she told me that it is insane of how kids today think that everything is digital. One of her 7-year-old students once was trying to tap a book in order to list the pages... Leaves you speechless, doesn't it?

In the present time, it is common for households to have several different communication mediums. Unlike in the seventies, when households barely had one television, today there is at least one in every house. By "at least", I would like to emphasize that in the modern households you can often find televisions in addition to their traditional spot in the living room, also in bedrooms of the household members.

Just when we would have thought, and some even hoped that technological inventions could wait for a while, this time period provided us with two new communication mediums: tablets and smartwatches.

3.3.1 Tablets

With time, people started to notice it is inconvenient to carry around laptops. Taking a laptop with you, you had to think of the possible chargers to take with you, mouse for ease of use, not to mention that you had to have a special protection case for the device and take in account many other circumstances. People also saw that not all internet content was available for mobile version, pages couldn't open to fit the mobile screens or the code cannot simply be run on a mobile device.

It didn't take long that the prayers of many were answered, computer tablets were launched. Compatible computers, as nearly thin as smartphones, but with bigger screens, which were designed to fully run any task and page, which before you were able of doing only on a computer.

Today tablets are starting to slowly replace laptops. In my opinion, nowadays a student's most used device is a tablet computer. They fit easily in bags, the only protection they need is a case, they already have network accessibility and other countless features of separate keyboards and styluses which can be connected to them. (Biggs, 2011.)

I have also come to notice on different social channels that tablets nowadays are quite handy tools for artists, illustrators, designers and other creative folks. Since tablets can be taken anywhere and they start to provide users with more possible features and programs, it allows the users to create directly on the spot. For example, an interior designer no longer has to go to an office to draw the layout for his or her customer. Today there are possibilities of creating the layout directly on the tablet and presenting it to the customer with visuals, making it even possible to re-edit instantaneously.

3.3.2 Smartwatches

When one would have thought that mankind had enough communication mediums and was as connected to the digital world as could be, smartwatches were released. A new device, through which people became even more cuffed to the digital world.

Not only do smartwatches keep their owners on track of time, but they display any sorts of notifications on your wrist. Instead of reaching every time for your phone, people are now able to simply glance at their wrist. With their own alarm and vibration alerts, smartwatches prevent users from ever missing a phone call or a text ever again.

Smartwatches also have eased life in plans of navigation. All maps and routes, today are visible on the watch screen, making it easier to track your movement. Speaking of movement, many smartwatches today have health apps available, giving users a chance to follow the heartbeat, sleep rhythm, calorie consumption and such throughout the whole day. There are also plenty of apps, which help users to take better care of themselves, by reminding them to stand up every now and then or even to take some time to simply breathe. (Fuchs, 2017.)

3.3.3 Snapchat

For those, who still haven't quite figured out what Snapchat is, what exactly it is meant for, or how it is supposed to be used, the following paragraphs are especially for you.

Snapchat is a mobile app, where users can message each other and share any sorts of content with anyone they want. It differs from the other apps in a way that the content is available only for a few seconds, after what the content disappears forever.



Picture 8: Snapchat Appeals to the younger generation (Vaynerchuk, 2017)

What appears to be confusing to Snapchat users is the simplicity of the app. Because the camera works as the app's main screen, many are thrown off with the navigation.

Snapchat is mostly used by teenagers however many companies today are starting to catch up to utilize the app's features for their own needs. According to Snapchat's own research, 71% of Snapchat users are under 34 years old, so what is it about Snapchat that makes it so popular?

The app provides its users with many visuals and instantaneous usage. What appeals the most to the young generation is the privacy Snapchat offers. It is a tool to capture moments, memories. As we discussed before communication with emoji's, on Snapchat users communicate through the filtered images and videos they send to one another. Because all content is available only for a few seconds and is shared with only those whom the user wishes, the chance of the content ending up in unwanted hands is minimal.

With those words, I would like to point out that even though the content is visible for mere few seconds, in the world we live in, it doesn't mean that no one will ever take a screen shot of the image while it is active. Snapchat has also become a channel to brag about or cause envy in other people. As all other social media channels these days, on Snapchat there are too many stories of how people were cheated and deceived. (Maccabee 2016.)

3.3.3.1 Snapcode

The app has been so revolutionary, it brought several new terms to our lexicon. Here are few terms which are good to know:

- Snapchatters: Snapchat users
- Snaps: pictures and videos you send to other snapchatters which can be viewed between 1 to 10 seconds before the content disappears forever
- Snapback: a reply to the snap
- Story: a snap, which can be broadcasted among your followers. Stories can be viewed for unlimited amount of times within 24 hours since its publish, during which users can also add snaps to their story to create a narrative loop
- Scores: number of snaps the user has sent, received and stories they have posted
- Snapcode: scannable codes which make adding a Snapchat friend easier. Snapcode are accessed through the ghost icon in the upper centre of the main screen
- Snapstreak: when the user has snapped with friends for within 24 hours for more than one day. When the user is on a snapstreak, an emoji will appear next to the users Snapchat name
- Snapcash: a feature, which allows users to use their debit cards to pay for goods or send money to their friends via Snapchat
- Snapchat Spectacles: introduced in October 2016, a pair of connected spectacles can record video of snippets and save them automatically to the users Snapchat Memory. The purpose of the spectacle is said to mimick how people actually see. (Betters 2017.)

3.3.4 Instagram

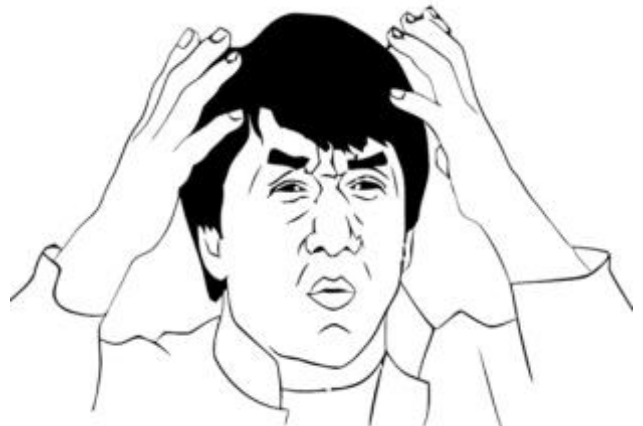
Last, but not the least digital channel, which I will cover in my thesis is Instagram. As all other social media channels, to be an Instagram user, you require an account. Once signed up, on the bottom of the screen, you will have five differently shaped button, starting from left to right: news, search, add content, likes, personal feed. As you begin to post the desired contents, they will become visible on your feed, available for others to see. Lately a story-feature has become available on Instagram similar to Snapchat. This is a great feature in case the user doesn't simply wants to share a video on the stream or even cast a live-video (Moreau 2016).

What I myself, as a creative soul found very appealing in Instagram is that it encourages people to develop their creative abilities. No matter if you are a photographer, artist, character designer, storyteller, whoever, Instagram gives the users a nice set of opportunities.

Instagram has become a new way of sharing pictures and communicating with friends in an original way. But what it seems to lack is the dependency it causes among its users. Instagram as supposedly other social media channels in that matter have been misused for stalking, teasing, bullying, accounts have been hacked and so forth (Vinola 2013).

What I myself have found a bit disturbing on Instagram is that people tend to post in stories how they are walking to their work or that "Ew, it's raining" or how they bought a salad... People, who cares? I understand of following the hype of a celebrities' diets, but what do regular people see in such posts?

Sometimes, to me it feels like people have lost the know-how of posting interesting things or what are worthy of showing, or probably the past generation has had its impact on me too. People are ready to post nowadays almost anything, the question remains, why?



Picture 9: Do all of your posts have meaning? (Flickr, 2012)

4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Communication

In the previous chapters, advantages and disadvantages of communication mediums and channels were discussed. This chapter focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of Digital Communication as one whole concept.

The world has changed in the past 50 years significantly, and the ways we interact have changed with it. From the time mankind used to doing things on their own, technology brought us to an era, when most of the things are done for us by machines and computers.

4.1 Key Figures

To gain a better understanding of how much we actually consume the internet in the present day, the image below (Pic. 8) demonstrates the statistics of digital users in 2017.



Picture 10: Digital Users 2017 (MIX, 2017)

Almost 74% out of Internet users are active on social media and almost the equal amount use their phones for the purpose. This means that less than 30% use the internet and their mobiles for other purposes.

Coming to think of such possible people, firstly my granny comes to mind, who goes online just to get some information, where an office or a bureau is located (where she lives their locations change quite frequently) and she uses Skype to give us a call every now and then. And of course, there are also those people who simply do not find the necessity of being social media users.

4.2 Advantages

For many people, digital channels have become ways to earn a living. The digital world has provided us with lots of new and different possibilities, opportunities and opened many doors. Digitalisation itself had made our lives in many ways more easier, giving us more time to do whatever we wish.

Sometimes however, I get a feeling that the purpose of the devices was to be primarily to be our side-tools, which we could use in extreme situations, when we actually weren't capable of performing the task. Mankind however, in my observation, is a type of species, which likes to do things the easy and the faster way, and through this we ended up adopting the tools as obvious everyday solutions.

4.3 Disadvantages

I found a quote online, which supposedly is one of Albert Einstein's sayings : "I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots" (Quote Investigator 2013).

Were those Einstein's words or not, there lies truth to them. If anyone would take a moment to observe how computers have changed us. We no longer bother to learn anything by heart as our grandparents and parents have. The knowledge that anything we would ever need it find is just a Google away. As before in math class our folks used their brains to calculate algorithms, today for the purpose we have calculators.

Though life has become so much easier in many ways thanks to digitalisation, we still have to be aware of many things. We must be keep caution of the risks we are put at when surfing the web. Quite often we are taking matters into action when the harm has already been done and we start to search for a solution once the damage has been already done.

Last year in the fall, I happened to listen to one of the broadcasts on Beats1 radio. The host of the broadcast was Zane Lowe, he was interviewing Lady Gaga due to her newest released album: Joanne. During the interview, the two got to talking about the topic of what sort, the usage of internet has become in today's world. The phrase, which really moved me, was when Ms Gaga said: Internet is like Earth in a way, we are going to destroy it. It is garbage. What I found very interesting in the interview was to hear the singer say that the way people express themselves on social media is an illusion, what happens in the room is the "real stuff" (YouTube 2016).

5 Discussion

This thesis gives a general understanding of digital communication and the roles of digital mediums, channels and of their importance. It demonstrates how much the world has changed over the past 50 years.

Being born in the nineties, and living through this change has been so fascinating, but on the other hand, in a way I am terrified of even imagining of what there is to come next.

5.1 Conclusion

Before my very own eyes, I have watched how digital communication brought many changes into our lives. It has affected our way to communicate, see and understand the world, but also through digitalization, many of appliances have changed or have come to an extinction. So, let's give a moment of silence for VCRs, DVDs, Gameboys, music plates and many other wonderful treasures, which are no longer part of our lives.

Everything what we have today, makes me think of how much we take it all for granted, and how much less our folks had in their youth compared to what the young generation processes today. Many can agree of how spoiled mankind has become, and we keep on wanting more and more. The demands are getting higher and companies are so caught up on money that they are just continuing to fill in the demands, without even a second thought of the consequences it will bring us to.

If anyone happened to watch the movie, *The Internship*, starring Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn, in the beginning of the film, when the two were being fired by their boss, the boss's lines were: "...It means everything's computerized now! It's cheaper for a machine to tell these companies what to order than a manufacturer's rep. They don't need us anymore ... People hate people. Times have changed" (IMBD, 2017).

And indeed, they have!

5.2 Evaluation of learnings

Writing this thesis had its challenges. Not only this was my first longest and most difficult report I ever had to write so far, staying true to my own voice when writing an academic styled thesis, was the biggest challenge of all.

Despite the difficulties I had to face, looking back at this process, I noticed how much I have actually learned. Searching for the information and using different research methods for topic of high interest was one of the most rewarding experiences in this task.

Digital communication is a vast topic, which can be discussed on many different levels, depending on the focus of the area. For my bachelor's thesis, I decided to focus only on how the digital communication has evolved and how it has shaped the world we know today. Despite the desire of discussing all areas on a deeper level, I decided to K.I.S.S (Keep It Short and Simple) to avoid the risk of overwhelming the readers with too much detail. Perhaps, one day, there will come a time, when I will get the chance to discuss the subject more in detail.

While writing this thesis, I came across the image below (Pic. 9). When I was conveying this research, I have discussed the topic with the older generation. Listening to them how they told about what studying was like when they were as old as I am now, was mind blowing. So much have changed in so little time, and my respect to my mom and grandparents hasn't been stronger.



Picture 11: Remember to respect your parents (Imgfave, 2017)

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